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IPA III Consultation with Civil Society in Kosovo, Resource Center Kosovo, FIQ

Date: 02 March 2020

Venue: Resource Center Kosovo, FIQ premises

Report on consultations with CSOs

The IPA III consultation meeting was opened by Dajana Berisha, Executive Director of the Forum for Civic Initiatives, which also the carrier of the Resource Centre Kosovo project. She emphasized that the IPA III consultation process is of particular importance, given that it expresses the need for interventions from the forthcoming funds, and that the inclusion of the CSOs in the consultation process is particularly important.

Further on, the EU representative Ms. Hillen Francke was asked to speak about IPA III planning process and differences between IPA III and IPA II.

The representative of the EU Office in Kosovo Ms. Hillen Francke, expressing an appreciation for the organization of consultations on IPA III process, expressed her hope that today's meeting would serve as a discussion among the participants i.e. CSO representatives. She also said discussions should be the whole point of these meetings, concluding that the more the voices saying the same thing, the easier for them to justify any decision. She maintained that the main difference between IPA II and IPA III is the budget duration; for IPA II, the duration was 2014-2020, whereas now it is proposed that the IPA III has a duration of 7 years (2020-2027). According to the EU Commission representative, Ms. Hillen Francke, the European has proposed the budget to the EU Council and the European Parliament, and they should have their say. IPA III is a follow-up to of IPA III, with a sectorial approach. It is worth noting that more strategic approaches rather than smaller projects are needed. The key difference is competitiveness. Kosovo and every other IPA country have so far received a certain amount of funds, henceforth to be classified based on competitiveness. In Kosovo we have quite suitable legal conditions, but implementation has left much to be desired. Corruption, confiscation of property, economic informality, property rights and other issues have made all that more

difficult. What we can say is that there is no project maturity in terms of authenticity of presentations (e.g. there were cases when the land was not as presented to us). What we want is an approximation of priorities, and we want the Civil Society to reflect on this. The program framework for the seven countries that are part of IPA will also be published. Thereafter, the Governments should present their strategies by September.

The priorities have been designed via windows:

- Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy
- Good governance, alignment with the acquis, strategic communication and good neighbourly relations
- Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity (very high EU priority)
- Competitiveness and inclusiveness
- Territorial and cross-border cooperation

While these are priority windows, the crosscutting issues for each of the windows will be:

- Gender,
- Climate change
- Civil society
- Rights-based approach
- Public administration reform (in relation to the fight against corruption)

So, all these should be taken into account in writing project proposals.

It is also worth noting that the EFSD, which is an integrated financial package, is accessible to all countries.

The message conveyed by the EU representative Ms. Hillen Francke, for the Government is that proposed actions for IPA III are well-prepared and that there should be inclusiveness and consensus. According to her, in terms of inclusiveness, Civil Society plays a very important role as a representative of the society. You should make your recommendations through an official channel, so when the Government asks for your recommendations, your role should be reflected in those recommendations via your studies, analysis and work. The message to CSOs is to start having meetings with the Government and the relevant Ministries immediately and to not quit until you have them take your opinion into account.

As regards the summary made by the EU representative Ms. Hillen Francke, Dajana Berisha said that EU's request to include the CS in the meetings with the respective ministries is encouraging. She also informed the participants that the Government-Civil Society Cooperation Council will meet on 03 March 2020. We will also ask the Government to keep us informed of the further process.

The meeting continued with questions and comments made by the participants, as follows:

Nicole Farnsworth from Kosovo Women's Network

1. Is it possible to consult us on IPA III final draft and what is the timeline? We are interested in gender issues.
2. What does competitiveness mean for the CS??
3. Can we give our recommendations on IPA III Regulation today or perhaps we should send our comments in writing??

Answers by EU representatives

1. The regulation is still being drafted – it will consist in implementation rules. As for deadlines, I don't know.
2. As regards competitiveness for the CS, not all opportunities and tasks have been clarified, and we are still waiting. It was us in Brussels who have written the action papers. How share that we have dedicated to support fields in the past has varied e.g. rule of law has had around 20% of total funds. It is important for us to have a strategic approach. Funding will be based on priorities; we will therefore proceed with the same approach when it comes to priorities.

Concerning the criteria for the evaluation of project proposals, such as the issue of policy relevance and technical maturity of organizations that will deliver project proposals, it was stated that it depends on the contracts and that in the past the EU has approved the annual program for 2018, signing of contracts and other technical issues and that 1 year has passed and we are still implementing IPA 2016 here and there, so it means different things.

A recommendation on the way to organize IPA III consultations was given by Dren Puka from KCSF, who stated that IPA III consultations should follow an organizational structure as it was for IPA II, where meetings were organized for 1 window rather than all windows in one place. Accordingly, the meetings should be structured in more detail, because meetings touching upon all topics at the same time do not come up with proper recommendations.

Concerning this recommendation, Dario Di Benedetto from the EU Office in Kosovo said that one should distinguish between consultative meetings and these meetings, which are in fact meetings where architecture of the way to structure the consultations is discussed. The consultations we are talking about are technical-program consultations. The time for specific consultations will come.

In addition, a concern raised by Bardha Tahiri from the KCSF was that not all small NGOs could go to the meetings with the ministries. Organizational networks come to play here.

There were also questions about culture, namely why it was not reflected anywhere, and the answer given by the representative of the EU Office in Kosovo was that Culture is the main pillar and priority of the EU, and assistance in the cultural sector is provided through an EU-program dedicated to culture.

At the end of the meeting, all NGOs attending the meeting were invited to participate in the meeting with the Office of Good Governance, on 3 March 2020.





